THE UTES ARE DANCING.

They Are Joyous at the Prospect of Big Money, and at the Prospective Advance in Value of Their Lands by Moffat Railroad.

It is not the war dance with its visions of daring and carnage, but a harvest dance, commonly known as the Sun Dance. And why should they not dance with joyous hearts, since so much is happening that concerns them! The sum of $70,000 is soon to be distributed among 800 of them, and the other 800 will take chances of winning by games and races a few thousands of this large payment. There are other reasons for rejoicing. The new railroad from Denver to Salt Lake City is likely to come plumb through the reservation, enhancing the value of all their holdings and possibly give them some free rides. Mr. Moffat should not be surprised if a delegation should visit him and be his guests for a week, and make "big talk" about his railroad down the White river and up the Duchesne.

The opening of the Uintah reservation has for them its perils and its pecuniary advantages. The influx of white people may bring some trouble, as Indians prefer to be left alone in their settlement, but they are so confident that their mountains abound in "money rock" and that the "Americat" will get it out and share it with the Indian that they will be disposed to take the chances, and will dream of a life of leisure while the white man is delving for hidden treasures and carrying a portion to the wickiup, out of which the Ute will make the most glittering trinkets. Then after the allotment of lands, when he looks over the broad acres apportioned to him and the members of his family, and the work of tilling them stares him in his extravagantly painted face, he will certainly have another dream. It will be of hunting grounds farther away from Colorado. Too much railroad; too many white people; too much work, and the next thing will be a council, and a delegation off to Washington to ask President Roosevelt for one of the Philippine Islands to be given outright to the Utes in consideration of their hoisting the Stars and Stripes; defending the constitution and the flag; celebrating the Fourth of July in the most extravagant style, and giving the Philippines an exhibition of self-government under the direction of chiefs and headmen.

The Ute does not read the papers, but he has heard of the passage of the irrigation bill and the opening up of this far West and the incoming of the whites, and then the crowding upon the red men. He is always asking, "what's the news," and wanting something new—a change—it may be a new agent or employee; possibly only a new $10 pony and $40 saddle. But the prosperity of ur country is cause for dancing. Good times everywhere and the white man has a dollar in his pocket to lend the Indian. The Ute seldom asks for more. If he needs more money at one time he prefers to borrow from several persons rather than distress a friend by draining his pocket-book.

What an ovation President Roosevelt would have among them! They know he can ride a bucking Indian pony; throw the lasso, and shoot straight at game. Then they somehow associate much that takes place with the Great Father at Washington. Recently their rations were materially reduced and they were thus elevated almost to a condition of independence. This was a compliment to their capacity for self-support and touched their native pride and now they will want to live "all the same" as "Americats," and abandon their wigwams to live in houses with Queen Anne fronts and Mary Ann backs.

"Me heap hungry" is the first English the Ute formerly learned, but now, so many new things occupy his mind that he forgets his hunger in his dreams of plenty in the near future. And so he is dancing. Eighty-three of them are at it. They are solemn enough, but the drummers, and the singers and the crowd are a jolly set.

The significance of the sun dance is not fully understood by white people, but nothing celebrated by the Utes is so impressive or partakes so much of the spirit of worship. For fifteen minutes before the dance, the dancers are all within a curtained enclosure on their knees and in silent communion with some one or something whose help they implore for this trying ordeal of dacing three or four days and nights without food or water. Then they march in single file and countermarch around the pavilion, or large uncovered area constructed for the exclusive use of the participants and musicians. Their costumes glitter with spangles, but are shockingly abbreviated in some instances, and every dancer is bare down to the waist and his feet and legs innocent of moccasins and pants. The exposed parts are painted yellow, red and white, usually, and the brave with his decorations looks formidable and determined. The eagle is in evidence in the dance. His feathers surmount the center pole; they are on the head of the dancer and dangle from his hands and his whistle. The whistle is made from the bone of an eagle's wing and is blown continually by everyone in action. These, with the huge drum and a dozen drummers, and the melody made by the squaw choir, make sufficient noise to stimulate the dancers to the extremest point of endurance.

Before the music starts up and the dancers get in motion, speeches are made urging every man to do his best as his wife and children are looking at him. These addresses, being extemporaneous, are very impressive and after the order of a sermon or exhortation, and in one instance it was a prayer closing with the Ute "amen." After each address there was hearty applause by hand-clapping.

The dance had proceeded but an hour when a tall dancer became ill and made his way to the pole, standing with his back against it. Another dancer came with an eagle wing-feather in each hand, and by various gentle and quick brushes about the Indian's face and the pole, made good medicine over him.

A dozen Southern Utes from Colorado are here. Among them is Buckskin Charlie, their chief. He is much above the average Ute in intelligence and personal appearance. A mustache on an Indian should be considered evidence of advancement in civilization, and his adds greatly to one's estimate of his looks and progressiveness. Among the dancers are four Shoshones from the north.

Talk as you will about the Utes; speculate as you may about their beliefs, there is something so earnest and serious about the sun dance; something so bewildering to white people, and supernatural in its interpretation that the candid mind cannot but conclude that the Ute believes there is a power above him whose help he must invoke when under the pressure of a trying ordeal. And this dance is one of thankfulness for the sunshine that makes the crops grow, and the grass for their very numerous ponies, and all the afflicted who participate in it are cured in some mysterious way, or at least helped in their real or imaginary infirmities. This they believe, and the importance of the sun dance as a health restorer and conserver of the physical and temporal interests of the tribes is not exceeded by the old time campmeeting, so necessary to the spiritual well-being of our fathers and mothers.

W. S. SMITH.

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